

## 1. What is Josefbus about?

Many people want to volunteer. Their motives may be very different: to do something meaningful, to practice German, to take action despite the lack of permission to work, to integrate themselves, to get to know new cultural circles, to give something back to society, to show solidarity and much more.

People in need who live in their own homes need assistance with small repairs or maintenance work, including the transport of large housing items, or the assembly and taking apart of furniture. Even the moving of heavy, large pieces of furniture becomes a problem. Why?

- The target group in need of services is unable to get help due to health, psychological, and / or age reasons.
- Paying for help is not an option due to low financial resources.
- The necessary level of repair is sometimes too little for professionals to accept these jobs.
- Caretakers, who provided help in the past, have been let go in many cases.
- Some people live in very isolated circumstances (with age comes an increasing level of isolation).
- Companies outsource the organization of services to customers (online "services"). Many people do not have the knowledge to organize this through the internet.

Supply and demand of home-based repair services for these very diverse target groups do not match using online platforms such as "fragnebenan".

Therefore, the Josefbus project was created to establish a new, non-profit approach to this challenge while at the same time offering a solution for other social issues, including the integration of volunteers (who are often migrants) who are neglected by wider society.

## 2. What is the idea behind Josefbus?

### From the perspective of volunteers (FW):

In the Josefbus team, volunteers can get involved providing manual work, with requirements not regarding their level of German, gender, age, social status and background. This is demonstrated by migrants who arrived in Austria in 2015. They were taken care of according to the respective law but not permitted to work. Even though many of whom may have received positive asylum notice, it is very hard for them to get a job without any work experience. Although these individuals often bring important skills, they can hardly put them to use in Austria. At Josefbus, the coordinator of the volunteers, Martin Müller, brings together people in pairs: one person who speaks fluent German and another with little knowledge of the language. An example which demonstrates that the concept works well is the team "Magdalena and Omid". The two are looking after people in need - such as Mrs. Hilde M., who has not left her apartment for 10 years. The team supports her by doing small repair work such as cleaning a clogged drain, retightening a few hinges in the kitchen and fixing a shaky lamp stand.

### *Benefits for volunteers*

- Gaining insight into different social worlds: social "parallel worlds" are revealed, dividing lines are softened, and social encounters outside of one's own experience are made possible. E.g.: Anna is studying at university, originally comes from Upper Austria and has never been in an apartment of an elderly Viennese person who receives home care. Omid has only been in Austria for 3 years, mostly interacting in his own community and with people in AMS courses. Our project stands out from many other volunteering activities by working with different groups. For example, Anna and Omid visiting a socially deprived woman with three children, attaching shelves to the wall in a child-proof manner. The two have the opportunity to learn about individuals in other social situations and to understand the challenges of people in need.
- Encouraging integration: people with a migration background get to know different parts of Austrian society learn new ways of living and dealing with life, are able to apply and improve their German, and get to know different parts of the city. Preconceptions about each "other" are softened.
- Developing and improving skills: Through Caritas training and teamwork, volunteers develop their knowledge and learn new skills. The teams continuously work in different settings and are repeatedly confronted with new situations. These experiences help them improve their adaptability, flexibility and self-confidence and serve as preparation for the Austrian labor market.

### From the perspective of people in need of assistance with home repairs

An increasing number of people are being cared for at home. Help is needed when they are dealing with a jammed lock, a broken lightbulb or a clogged drain. Other people at home face different problems, they are in mental and / or material need. They lack funds for relocating, their apartments are full with litter, their toilets are clogged, etc.

"If there is anything broken or not working properly in your household, Josefbus will come and help you for free."

In the first instance, people already supported by Caritas have gained access to Josefbus services. For example, people taken care of at home, families supported by Familienhilfe, or people moving from emergency quarters to their own homes, who then need assistance in relocating or assembling furniture. These people often live in social isolation, and their only human contact is often with social workers or nursing staff.

### *Benefits for this group of people*

- Breaking up a vicious circle: Getting in touch with volunteers makes people in need feel that they are regaining control of their lives and finding solutions to their own problems. For example: Mrs. A. lives with her three children in an apartment built in the 1950s. In the very worn-out living / bedroom, there is a shabby, sagging couch. The Josefbus team consisting of Michael, Mohammed and Said paint the room in a friendly, bright color and obtain a new, free sofa on "Willhaben" for Mrs. A. The effect on the family is very positive. The family caretaker (Familienhelferin) reports on an improvement in the spirits of Mrs. A. and a general improvement in things caused by this improvement in her living situation. Mrs. A. then even paints the kitchen with the leftover paint with the help of her friends.
- Social contact, solidarity, and facilitation of everyday life and safety:  
For example: A woman lives alone in an old building. The light bulb in the corridor is broken, the room height of more than 3.5 meters makes a quick repair difficult for her. The danger of tripping is great, especially at night. Help is provided by the team Josefbus. The tandem Michael and Rezat change the light bulb and also use the opportunity to oil the big double doors. After the work has been done, the team and the woman will get together, have a coffee and chat a little bit. The old lady gets to know not only the Austrian volunteer Michael, but also experiences her first contact with a person from Iran and is pleasantly surprised. Rezat is pleased with the appreciation he receives.

With regards to people receiving home care, this benefit is particularly outstanding, as social poverty such as loneliness is a big challenge among this group.

## 3. How many people are we talking about?

### **Volunteers**

#### Volunteers with a refugee background and migrants with little knowledge of German

In 2018, the Volunteering department of Caritas Vienna received approximately 1,600 (= 40%) inquiries from people with little German language skills who wanted to do voluntary work. They have the desire to be socially engaged, to show solidarity and to give something back to the society that took them in. Additionally, they hope to get to know German-speaking people in order to improve their language skills, to gain work experience and to do something meaningful.

#### Volunteers speaking German fluently

In addition, there is a growing demand for voluntary work by Austrians. About 50% of the German-speaking volunteers, who were informed about our project, can imagine themselves working once a month for Josefbus. Project Josefbus offers the possibility to increase the traditionally low share of men in social work.

### **People in need in private households**

Initially, surveys were conducted on the need for small repairs and manual work in Caritas. This analysis has shown that 80% of the 90 families (in the departments of Care and Family Aid) are in desperate need of help. In the section Home Care, demand is even higher, accounting for 10 - 20% of a total of 3,900 clients in Vienna and Lower Austria. The figures of Caritas make it possible to calculate the needs of the total population. The great potential of the project is obvious.

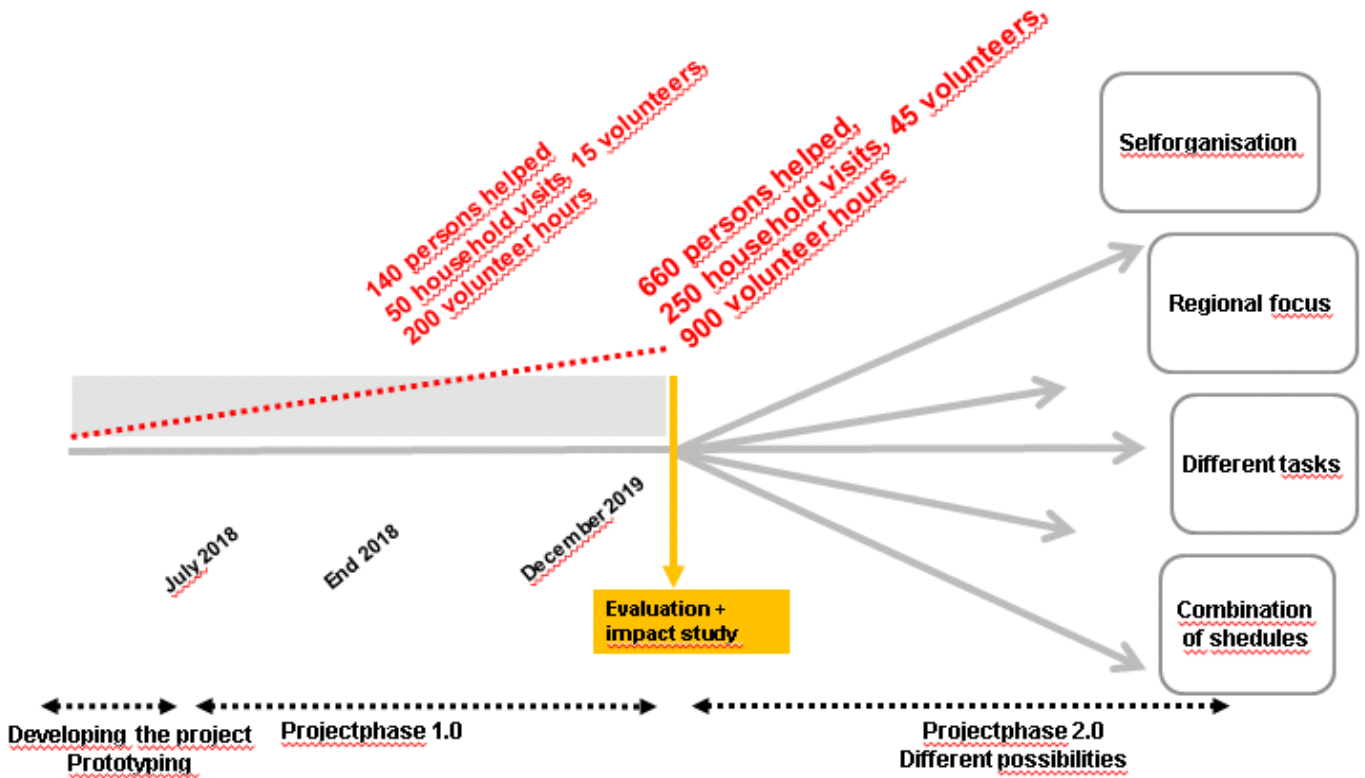
## 4. How does Josefbus work in detail?

This is best answered by giving a short example of the entire Josefbus process: Hamid and Andreas get to know the Josefbus project at an information event of the Volunteering Department by Caritas. After a first personal conversation with the project coordinator Martin, they receive a safety training. A trial run is arranged so that both sides can decide whether they fit into the Josefbus team. Hamid and Andreas are then placed on duty every two weeks. At the beginning Martin or Taha accompany the visits to clients. If a team remains stable and proves to be successful, it will soon operate on its own. The appointments and tasks are prepared and followed up by Martin and Taha. Four meetings offer the volunteers the opportunity to network and to develop a strong team spirit. Further educational events offered by the Volunteering Department can be attended by the Josefbus team free of charge. Events, tailored to the specific needs for the Josefbus team are held at least twice a year.

In addition to the job skills development benefits for migrants and individuals with an asylum-seeking/refugee status, these volunteers meet a wide variety of people. The feeling of belonging and solidarity is strengthened, the widening gap between social groups is narrowed. The ability to give something back to the Austrian society and to be valued for it generates satisfaction and enhances self-esteem.

A work van equipped with tools and small materials is available (currently the search for sponsors is still running). The volunteers drive to the individual households, carry out the necessary measures and give feedback to the people responsible for project coordination. If necessary, follow-up appointments are agreed upon.

**5. What are the long-term goals of the Josefbus Project?**



Various problems with a social setting such as loneliness, isolation, and poverty will be made more visible. Target group-independent involvement and therefore related feedback to the civil society is the project's goal. The mixing of the target groups helps integration, voluntary engagement in neighborhoods is promoted, and people with little knowledge of the German language can integrate much easier. The target groups are empowered and motivated to become active. The idea of the Josefbus is to be extended to the whole of Austria and extended to many other activities as well.

**Phase 1.0:** Preparatory Phase = 2nd half of 2017 - end of 1st half of 2018, Project Start = July 2018 until the end of 2019. The project will be carried out in shifts (at least Thursday and Tuesday afternoons and occasionally Friday morning) in Vienna and in December 2019, subject to a thorough evaluation and impact analysis.

**Phase 2.0:**

After Phase 1.0, the goal of Phase 2.0 is to implement the relevant feedback in further strategic measures.

**6. With whom does Josefbus cooperate and how is it financed?**

At present, the Volunteering Department works with various Caritas institutions / agencies, such as: Family Aid, Housing First, Home Care, etc.

In the longer term (Phase 2.0), extending and collaborating with other organizations and also the public sector is desirable to further increase sustainability.

The funding of the project coordination, which is currently being implemented with the lowest possible number of hours (25 h + 25 h of work from an "Integrationsjahr" staff member), is currently being provided by the individual departments "Bereiche" involved. The project is currently looking for sponsors and contributors in order to be able to increase the number of household visits, which is currently 2-4 / week.

The project Josefbus sets itself apart with its high degree of innovation and unique approach in Austria.